

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 02542

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: EFIS, MARR, PFOR, NATO, IC, UK

SUBJECT: UK/ICELAND FISHERIES DISPUTE

REF: STATE 38096

1. AS INSTRUCTED REFTTEL, POL COUNSELOR FEBRUARY 18 MADE POINTS PARAS 1 AND 4 TO RICHARD SYKES, DEPUTY UNDER-SECRETARY IN FCO, AND REG BURROWS, ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY IN FCO AND FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL DIRECTLY IN CHARGE OF ICELANDIC/UK FISHERIES DISPUTE.

2. IN RESPONDING TO OUR DEMARCHE, SYKES OBSERVED THAT IT REQUIRED TWO TO MAKE A SETTLEMENT AND BRITISH RECORD IN SEARCHING FOR SOLUTION SPOKE FOR ITSELF. AFTER REHEARSING WELL KNOWN UK COMPLAINTS ABOUT ICELANDIC INTRANSIGENCE AND WEAKNESS OF CURRENT ICELANDIC COALITION GOVERNMENT, SYKES SAID THAT SIMPLY BECAUSE "ICELAND WAS SMALL AND BLOODY MINDED" WAS NO REASON IT SHOULD GET EVERYTHING IT WANTED. HE CONTINUED "UNFORTUNATELY, WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH REASONABLE PEOPLE."

3. NEVERTHELESS. SYKES STRESSED, BRITISH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO SYG LUNS' EFFORTS AND, INDEED, WOULD WELCOME MEDIATION FROM ANY QUARTER WHICH COULD BRING THE TWO SIDES TOGETHER. WHAT THE BRITISH NEEDED, BURROWS
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SAID, WAS AN ICELANDIC NEGOTIATING FIGURE SUGGESTING A

SPECIFIC TOTAL UK CATCH. DURING MINISTERIAL TALKS AT THE END OF JANUARY. WHAT EMERGED AFTER 17 HOURS WITH ICELANDERS WAS THAT HALLGRIMSSON WAS IN NO POSITION TO OFFER ANY SPECIFIC FIGURE. HMG PRESENTLY HAD NO IDEA WHAT SORT OF CATCH FIGURE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ICELAND. IN SUCH A SITUATION. AND WITH NO SIGN OF ICELANDIC FLEXIBILITY, NEGOTIATIONS LOOKED IMPOSSIBLE. ALL THE SAME, BRITISH WOULD CONTINUE TO STRIVE TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE AND WOULD WISH LUNDS LUCK.

4. IN RESPONDING TO QUESTION. SYKES SAID BRITISH WOULD NEITHER PULL OUT FRIGATES IN ABSENCE OF ICELANDIC COMMITMENT TO CEASE TRAWLER HARASSMENT NOR ASK TRAWLERS TO WITHDRAW FROM DISPUTED AREAS WHILE NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING ON. THEY WOULD ALSO NOT ACCEPT CONSERVATION AREAS UNILATERALLY DESIGNATED BY GOI. SUCH ONE-SIDED BRITISH GESTURES WOULD SIMPLY REWARD ICELANDIC UNREASONABLENESS.

5. SYKES URGED U.S. TO DO WHAT IT COULD TO GET OTHERS TO PERSUADE ICELANDERS TO "SEE THE LIGHT" AND HALT CURRENT SENSELESS COURSE.

6. SYKES, WHO WAS FORMERLY DCM IN WASHINGTON. MADE ONE FINAL POINT. HE WONDERED WHETHER THERE WASN'T A LARGER ISSUE AT STAKE THAN A FEW THOUSAND TONS OF FISH. WAS THE U.S. WILLING, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY, TO ACCEPT A PRECEDENT IN WHICH A "TINY DEFENSELESS COUNTRY" COULD UNREASONABLY ENFORCE ITS WILL ON A LARGER ONE THROUGH ILLEGAL AND IMMODERATE ACTS. SYKES OPINED THAT SUCH AN INTERNATIONAL MODEL FASHIONED FROM ICELANDIC SUCCESS IN THIS DISPUTE COULD WELL CAUSE U.S. PROBLEMS FAR FROM KEFLAVIK.

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